

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for suppressing one or more features in an image of a page of content, comprising:

- (a) acquiring an image of a page of content;
- (b) identifying one or more features in the page image that are to be suppressed or not to be suppressed; and
- (c) preparing a substitute page image that only includes images of the identified features that are not to be suppressed.

2. The method of Claim 1, in which acquiring an image of a page of content comprises scanning a page of content into an electronic image format.

3. The method of Claim 1, in which acquiring an image of a page of content comprises converting electronic text into an electronic image format.

4. The method of Claim 1, in which acquiring an image of a page of content comprises retrieving a page image that was previously stored in a memory.

5. The method of Claim 1, in which identifying features that are not to be suppressed includes determining location and size information for the features in the page image that meet a non-suppression criterion.

6. The method of Claim 5, in which the non-suppression criterion identifies text in the page image.

7. The method of Claim 6, in which the non-suppression criterion identifies text that matches one or more specified terms.

8. The method of Claim 5, in which the non-suppression criterion identifies a non-text object.

9. The method of Claim 8, in which the non-text object has text associated therewith and the non-suppression criterion identifies the non-text object by reference to the object's associated text.

10. The method of Claim 5, in which preparing a substitute page image comprises generating a blank image and using the location and size information to copy one or more images of the non-suppressed features from the original page image to the blank image.

11. The method of Claim 10, in which copying images of the non-suppressed features comprises copying pixel information for the non-suppressed features from the original page image to the substitute page image at one or more locations corresponding to the locations of the non-suppressed features in the original page image.

12. The method of Claim 5, further comprising including background image information in the substitute page image that simulates background information in the original page image.

13. The method of Claim 12, in which background image information is included in the substitute page image by duplicating pixel information from the background of the original page image to the background of the substitute page image.

14. The method of Claim 13, in which background pixel information from one or more locations in the original page image is duplicated at corresponding locations in the substitute page image and interpolated through the remainder of the substitute page image to produce the background image information for the substitute page image.

15. The method of Claim 1, in which preparing a substitute page image comprises removing image information from the original page image that fails to correspond to the features that are not to be suppressed.

16. The method of Claim 1, in which preparing a substitute page image comprises removing image information from the original page image that corresponds to the features that are to be suppressed.

17. The method of Claim 1, in which identifying features that are to be suppressed includes determining location and size information for the features in the page image that meet a suppression criterion.

18. The method of Claim 17, in which the suppression criterion identifies text in the page image.

19. The method of Claim 18, in which the suppression criterion identifies text that does not match one or more specified terms.

20. The method of Claim 17, in which the suppression criterion identifies a non-text object.

21. The method of Claim 20, in which the non-text object has text associated therewith and the suppression criterion identifies the non-text object by reference to the object's associated text.

22. The method of Claim 1, further comprising including background image information in the substitute page image by duplicating pixel information from the background of the original page image to the background of the substitute page image.

23. The method of Claim 1, further comprising including background image information in the substitute page image by differentiating foreground pixel information from background pixel information, and removing foreground pixel information from the substitute page image that corresponds to the features to be suppressed.

24. The method of Claim 1, further comprising storing the substitute image in a page image database for later retrieval.

25. The method of Claim 24, in which a stored substitute image, when retrieved, constitutes an original page image that is subject to further feature suppression by (1) identifying one or more features in the retrieved page image that are to be suppressed or not to be suppressed, and (2) preparing a substitute page image that only include images of the identified features that are not to be suppressed.

26. The method of Claim 1, further comprising referring to an access rule that limits an amount of content that can be included in the substitute page image, and determining information for features in the page image that can remain in the page image in accordance with the access rule.

27. The method of Claim 26, in which determining information for features that can remain in the page image includes determining location and size information of the features.

28. The method of Claim 27, in which preparing a substitute page image comprises generating a blank image and using the location and size information to copy pixel information for the features that can remain into the substitute page image at the same locations as in the original page image.

29. The method of Claim 26, in which the access rule defines an aggregate amount of content that can be included in the substitute page image.

30. The method of Claim 26, in which the access rules define a percentage of content that can be included in the substitute page image.

31. The method of Claim 26, in which the access rule defines the amount of content based on content-specific information.

32. The method of Claim 26, in which the access rule defines the amount of content based on content ownership.

33. The method of Claim 26, further comprising referring to different access rules based on the location of a user.

34. The method of Claim 26, further comprising referring to different access rules based on the time at which the substitute page image is to be provided to a user.

35. A computer system that provides an image of a page of content to a user as a result of a search, comprising a search server in communication with a database server, in which the database server is configured with a library of content that includes (1) a page image database containing images of pages of content and (2) a text searchable database containing text and information identifying the page images in the page image database that contain the text, the search server being configured with computer-implemented instructions that enable the search server to retrieve a page image from the page image database based on a user search, identify one or more features in the

page image that are to be suppressed or not to be suppressed, prepare a substitute page image that only includes images of the identified features that are not to be suppressed, and provide the substitute page image to the user.

36. The computer system of Claim 35, further comprising an access rights database in the database server with access rules that limit the amount of content in the substitute page image provided to the user.

37. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server is further configured to determines location and size information for features in the page image that are to be suppressed or not to be suppressed.

38. The computer system of Claim 37, in which the search server prepares the substitute page image by generating a blank image and using the location and size information to copy one or more images of the non-suppressed features from the original page image to the blank image.

39. The computer system of Claim 38, in which the search server copies images of the non-suppressed features by copying pixel information for the non-suppressed features from the original page image to the substitute page image at one or more locations corresponding to the locations of the non-suppressed features in the original page image.

40. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server prepares a substitute page image by removing image information from the original page image that fails to correspond to the features that are not to be suppressed.

41. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server prepares a substitute page image by removing image information from the original page image that corresponds to the features that are to be suppressed.

42. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server is further configured to include background image information in the substitute page image that simulates background information in the original page image.

43. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server is further configured to include background image information in the substitute page image by differentiating foreground pixel information from background pixel information, and removing foreground pixel information from the substitute page image that corresponds to the features to be suppressed.

44. The computer system of Claim 35, in which the search server is further configured to store the substitute page image in the page image database for later retrieval.

45. The computer system of Claim 44, in which the search server is further configured to act on a retrieved substitute page image as if it is an original page image subject to further feature suppression.